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STAINED GLASS

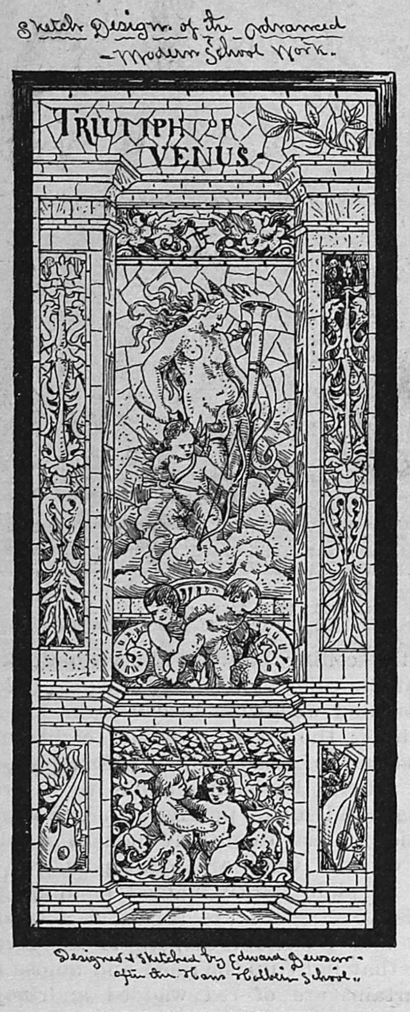
AS APPLIED TO TRANSPARENCIES.

BY EDWARD DEWSON.

I DO not propose to present in this paper a series of technical terms and historical dates on the subject of stained glass, for, in the first place, such particulars are of but little interest to the general reader, as well as difficult to remember, and in the second, dates differ widely, and more than one country claims the birth and discovery of this now important accessory to home decoration.

All that is clearly known on this point is the fact that stained glass existed in France, in a primitive state of development, as early as the twelfth century; it is impossible to fix any reliable date prior to this.

The art evidently came into existence through a species of evolution, and may claim a parentage on the one side through the necessity—in glazing large openings—of binding together the small pieces of glass manufactured in those days, and on the other, naturally enough, through the art of the mosaic worker. Thus we readily trace the birth of the industry back to the earlier and longer known art of mosaic work, and can see how the primitive class workers drew their inspiration from this source, both as to pattern and *motif*, for the lead lines bind together the pieces of glass as the *tesseræ* of a mosaic are bound together by cement.


Sketch Design of the advanced
-Modern School Work.
TRIUMPH OF VENUS
Designed & Sketched by Edward Dewson-
after the Hans Holbein School.

DESIGN AFTER HANS HOLBEIN.

As a brief statement of its early history, this will suffice; of its later development more is known, and one point after another has been improved until the art has reached its present state of almost perfection—I say almost perfection, for what have we still in modern glass work to compare with the medieval church windows of Europe, where each piece seems a jewel in itself, glinting and sparkling with an inborn fire, and showing clearly that up to the present time, at least, they have not been equaled, and that the old masters of the art, even with their imperfect materials and "limited palette," produced some incomparably beautiful effects. To a certain extent these effects were brought about by the careless and rude manner of manufacturing, leaving, as it did, fibres, bubbles, and surface corrugations, irregularities aimed at by modern workers through much experiment and careful study, the results of which I will speak of later on. Again, the workman of that time was more or less imbued with the spirit of art, as art was then a matter of every-day concern, and he drew his inspiration from the smallest things of nature, as well as the larger and more ornate. During the past decade the modern workman has drawn his inspiration from anything but nature, and could well take a few lessons from his medieval brother.

The working of stained glass had long degenerated as an art, and was only used as a secondary and unimportant accessory to church and hall decorations. The work done was not, properly speaking, stained glass at all. If imported "pot-metal" was used, it was used sparingly, most of the work was simply what is known as "enamel work"—clear glass with a thin coating of enamel color on one side, the colors being invariably thin, raw and unsatisfactory in point of harmony, and dreary, unsightly and commonplace. In fact, stained glass manufacturing as an art had reached such a low level that it was impossible, in this age of art refinement and education, that such a state of things could last; and, as a matter of course, a reaction set in. Practical as well as artistic eyes saw its advantages as well as possibilities for decorative purposes, and earnest minds bent themselves to the task of reviving, in measure, its ancient glory, with what satisfactory results may readily be seen by examining the works of such men as LaFarge, Tiffany and McDonald. These gentlemen combine, as in days of old, the practical workman with the refined and cultivated artist, and from the results already seen we may well expect rarer attainments in days to come.

I have spoken of modern glass manufacture and its results, and will add here that through the efforts of these American artist workmen and others interested, we have now in this country "pot metal" nearly as heavy and rich in tone, color and texture as the twelfth century glass.

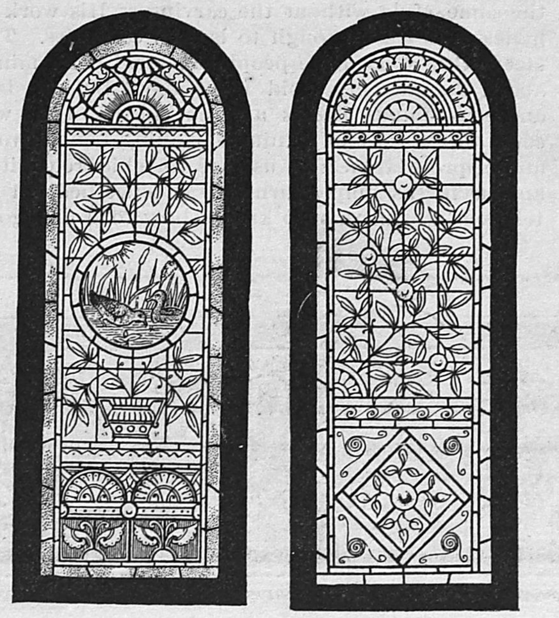
Very little, if any, glass is now imported to this country, as the larger manufacturers produce their own material and vie with each other in its quality and tones.

The more recent and most important American contribution to the art is the "opal" or opaque fusible porcelain, invented by Mr. LaFarge; this, as I understand it, is not properly a new invention, as fusible porcelain has been used before this gentleman took it in hand; but he has improved, added to and brought out its peculiar and valuable qualities that it is hardly recognizable in its new dress, and he may for these qualities claim it as a new invention.

A KNIGHT IN ARMOR OF THE XVITH CENTURY.

The design, "Triumph of Venus," is given as a simple illustration of the advanced school of design in this branch of industry, where architectural features are introduced and made a point of in the design, as well as the decorative and figure parts. This piece is worked up somewhat after the Hans Holbein school, but very much modified, and I would suggest to designers in these and kindred branches of industrial art that the schools of Albert Durer and Hans Holbein offer a rich field for suggestion and detail to those who are able to avail themselves of its advantages.

A very beautiful effect is produced in a room by the use, not only of stained glass door and window panels, but stained glass ceilings as well. These may be very beautiful if colors are properly selected with due regard to their location.



GLASS DOOR PANELS.

Refraction is obtained by lining the background with gold and silver leaf, and under gas or strong candle-light the "glinty glow" of the reflection is extremely rich. Of course such a ceiling is very costly, and beyond the reach of the average pocket-book.

Stained glass is also used largely for fire screens, and here the opalescent glass may be used in large quantities, as the fire-light in passing through its milky depths scintillates, as it were, and the glow of a blazing fire is beautifully softened and transmitted by it.

For small screens nothing is better than a branch of flowers or blossoms thrown with apparent carelessness across one side, against a background of broken blues, shading into the opaque, topaz fired white, the design being balanced by a bird, butterfly or flying elfe in the opposite corner.

THE most convenient book case for a working library or a small sitting room, may be made by any carpenter at a nominal cost. End pieces of walnut, with an upper shelf of the same, are desirable; the lower shelves may be made of pine, with a walnut facing, or, if preferred, let leather be tacked along the outer edge. The number of supporting partitions would, of course, depend upon the length of the shelves, but it is not wise to have an unsupported stretch of more than four feet at most. The shelves may fit into slots in the partitions and ends, or, still better, may be sustained by cleats, of which there could be several sets, permitting the height of the shelf to be regulated by the height of the books. The upper shelf might be devoted to bric-a-brac or the "overflow" of the lower shelves. Such a case is attractive and economical.